Christmas without the Snow

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/1101608.

Rating:	Not Rated
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter
Additional Tags:	Christmas time!, child!Will, AU, Fluff, Puppies
Language:	English
Series:	Part 2 of Family
Stats:	Published: 2013-12-26 Words: 2,360 Chapters: 1/1

Christmas without the Snow

by Azvee

Summary

The promised Christmas one-shot to Safe with Me!

It's Will and Hannibal's first Christmas together since leaving the country, and it could be going better.

Notes

Surprise, I'm not dead!

In honor of passing finals in school and the holiday, I give you a (belated) Christmas story!

See the end of the work for more notes

“It doesn’t feel like Christmas without snow.” Will mused as he stared out the window at the snowless ground. Normally the snow was a part of the holiday that Will couldn’t stand; but now he found himself missing it and the chill it brought with. “Italy’s winter is weird.”

Hannibal couldn’t help the smile that came to his face at the comment. He hated to laugh at the boy’s misery, but it was difficult to avoid doing so. “The weather is warmer here, most snow that comes here ends up turning to rain before it reaches the ground.”

Hannibal pulled some panettone out from the oven and set it on the counter to cool. He still had much work to do before the holiday arrived. There was food to prepare and decorations to be hung and a few presents still needed to be taken care of. The next few days would prove to be busy ones. This was not only Will’s first Christmas with Hannibal, but the first holiday they would be celebrating since learning Hannibal was the Ripper and fleeing the country over a month ago.

Hannibal had thought of sending Jack a card to mark the occasion, but thought better of it after Will walked by him. If he were on his own; Hannibal would gladly have mocked the man, but he needed to think of Will as well. It was better that the Agent have no possible leads to follow while he hunted them, getting caught would mean saying farewell to Will. That was not a risk Hannibal was willing to take.

“Staring out the window is not going to change the weather. Come over here and and try a slice. This is my first attempt at panettone is several years and I would like to know what you think of it.”

The promise of fresh baked food was enough to draw the boy away from the window and into the kitchen. As much as Will wanted to keep a sullen expression on his face, he found it melting away into curiosity and a slight hunger as the scent and warmth of the busy kitchen hit him. Hannibal cut a slice of the loaf for Will to try and watched as the food brought a smile to Will’s face. He was truly grateful that cooking for Will still never failed to bring out a smile. Hannibal knew he was a slave to those smiles.

“It’s good!” Will managed to say between bites of the bread.

“Now, I believe that there is a Christmas tree that needs decorating.” Hannibal prompted as Will finished eating. It had taken a bit of looking, but they had managed to find a bright evergreen to take back to their new home.

“We’re finally going to put lights on the tree?” Will asked before devouring the rest of his bread and taking off towards the main room. Hannibal had let Will pick out the decorations and ornaments to put on the tree. He personally did not care what went on as long as Will was happy with it.

The rest of the day was spent with Will buzzing back and forth between the kitchen and the tree. After they had put up the many glittering ornaments and lights Will had picked out, a shining star was placed on top of the tree. Several brightly wrapped boxes were added beneath it to complete the image. Hannibal then retreated back to the kitchen to finish

preparing the meals for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. His work was slowed on several occasions when Will came in to try and guess what was waiting for him under the tree or see what was on the menu. He was ushered out of the kitchen each time.

Christmas Eve proved to be decidedly more exciting and stressful for Hannibal. He had finished cooking up as many lavish seafood dishes as he could for their dinner that night. Their feast of seven fishes had perfectly prepared dishes of cod, oyster, crab, and many other creatures of the deep. Will eagerly tried each dish and asked many questions about what went into each one. The last few day's work was easily worth the adoration Will was showing Hannibal. It was something that he had missed sorely since their relocation to Italy.

He even allowed the child to open some of his gifts early. Everything under the tree was only of the finest quality, be it clothing or electronic. No expense was to be spared for Will this holiday. After opening a few, Will took off towards his room. Hannibal assumed he was going to wait for the coming of Christmas morning, but found him returning with a small box of his own. Will handed it off to Hannibal with a blush and watched as Hannibal opened it up.

Inside the box was a pair of straw ornaments. They had been handmade in secret as a surprise gift. Apparently he had found time to look up Lithuanian holiday traditions while Hannibal had kept himself busy. "If you don't want them, that's ok…" Will mumbled as he looked at the floor.

"Oh, my dear Will." Hannibal was touched. He hadn't celebrated the holiday in several years, and thus hadn't received many Christmas gifts either. Even those he got tended to be bland and generic in nature. He got ties or cards to fancy stores and restaurants, nothing personal. But Will had not only found something attached to Hannibal's past, but he had put the effort into making his gift by hand. "They are beautiful." He reached out a hand to embrace the boy, but saw the slight flinch at the movement. That was alright though, Will was still worried about personal contact after learning about Hannibal's other activities. He put his arm down and studied the gift instead. "Did it take you long to make these?"

"The hard part was trying to keep the straw from breaking. It does that a lot."

As much as Hannibal wished to stay and enjoy the evening with Will, he had one final gift to pick up for tomorrow. He put the gift from Will aside with a sincere thank you and grabbed his coat from the closet before heading towards the door. "I am going to be out for awhile, Will. Will you be alright with being alone for a few hours?"

Will froze at the words. "You're going to do it again, aren't you?"

"Do what again?"

"Kill someone." The boy seemed to shrink in on himself as he said it.

Now Hannibal was faced with a dilemma. He truly wasn't going out to end the life of some worthless piece of meat; but he couldn't tell Will the true nature of his trip. It was meant to be a surprise. "Will, I am not going out to murder anyone. I would never do such a thing around Christmas." Which wasn't exactly true, Hannibal had killed plenty of people during past holidays. But, with Will around now he didn't want to upset the child during a time that was meant for peace. Will needed all the peace he could get after having such a rapid change take place in his life.

"That's a lie." Will stated with absolute certainty. "It doesn't matter what day it is to you." He curled up facing away from Hannibal on the sofa.

"Will…"

"Just leave me alone. You don't have to lie to me." Will muttered and hid his head in his arms. Hannibal thought about trying to tell Will the truth about his trip to calm the boy down, but chose not to. He didn't have the time to spare and there was no guarantee that Will would believe him. Everything would be explained and forgiven tomorrow when the gift was given.

"You will understand tomorrow." He said with a sigh before leaving Will to pout.

When he got back, Will was sleeping on the sofa by the tree. Apparently he hadn't moved from there since Hannibal's departure. Will was truly hoping that he could get Hannibal to stop killing. The prolonged pout was another attempt to convince the man to stop. It was an argument that Will was going to continue to lose until he stopped feeling the need to make an argument. For now though, it continued to create a rift between the two.

Hannibal debated the merits of waking the boy so he could sleep in his own room, but decided against it. Instead, he put his surprise for Will away for safekeeping and found a blanket to drape over his sleeping form. Spending one night on the sofa would not harm the boy. It also appeared that this was going to be a rare night where Will would be able to sleep through it. Hannibal could not in good conscience wake Will when he looked to finally have found a peaceful night's sleep.

The sound of a knife chopping woke Will. He sat up and rubbed the sleep away from his eyes before looking through the open door to the kitchen. Hannibal was busy chopping up several different vegetables and adding them to a pan with butter and seasoning. He grabbed the blanket as it fell down from his shoulder and pulled it around himself before shuffling into the kitchen.

Hannibal didn't take his eyes off the food as he greeted Will. "Good morning, Will. Did you sleep well?"

"Mmhmm.." Will managed as he wrapped the blanket tighter around himself. He was always a slow waker in the mornings.

“Good. I thought today would be a good day to have a vegetarian breakfast.” Something about the way he said the word vegetarian brought Will’s mind back the yesterday and the reason he was on the couch this morning.

“Did you do it?”

“If you mean kill someone, the answer is still no.” Hannibal added several shakes of pepper to the pan.

“I don’t want to have anything you cooked.”

Hannibal ignored the weak protest and slid a portion of the vegetables onto a plate before handing it to Will. “I can guarantee that this meal has been assembled without the help of any other human. It is people free.”

Will ate his food in his bedroom, something that Hannibal would later have a talk with him about. But there was much to be done by this evening if they were to have a proper Christmas meal. The talk would need to wait until after the holiday. Today was to be dedicated to finishing the different parts of the antipasti and putting the final touches on the shrimp marsala as well as several other different tasks. Will would understand what his trip had been about soon enough anyway. His mood would change then.

Will was in a much better mood after dinner. As much as he wanted to hold onto the anger over Hannibal’s actions; getting to eat so much good food made it nearly impossible to do so. Hannibal had been careful to never serve anything that Will could mistake for human ever since he had found out what Hannibal did with the remains of his victims. That meant an increase in the amount of chicken and seafood used in dishes, but Will didn’t mind. It put him at ease morally and allowed him to try fish he had never heard of before.

“I know you have several gifts still beneath the tree, but there is one more gift waiting for you in the guest bedroom.” Hannibal said as Will put away his plate. He could see the brief debate going on in Will’s head over whether to accept the gift or not. His childish sense of curiosity won out in the end and he started down the hallway.

Will reluctantly went to the door, expecting to find some strange antique waiting within. Hannibal had an odd fondness for old and rare things after all. Instead, he found something he had given up hope of ever seeing again inside. A very familiar head of black fur poked its way out of the door and stared up at Will for a moment before eagerly attacking him.

“Sadie!” Will scooped up the squirming dog and pulled her close. “I thought I’d never see you again!”

“It seemed a shame to have such a large yard and no pet to run through it.” Hannibal explained while he watched Will’s face get washed with kisses from his pet. For now, any

thought of germs was put aside in favor of the pure joy plastered across his face along with the dog slobber.

Will seemed to realize just who was behind the reunion and put the dog down before wrapping himself around Hannibal's torso in a tight hug. "Thankyouthankyouthankyou!"

Hannibal brushed off the dognapping as if it were nothing. "I did promise to try and retrieve her." In truth, it had been a very hard task to accomplish. He had been forced to use several false identities and associate with many less than pleasant people willing to abduct a serial killer's dog. They probably assumed that their client was some obsessed and most likely disturbed fan of the Ripper. But, disturbed or not, his money was good so he got the dog.

Said dog was once again wiggling around in Will's arms as he ran a hand through her fur. Hannibal decided that it was worth the trouble as he felt happiness practically radiating off of Will. "I can't believe you found her!"

"Finding her was quite easy Will." He said with an easy smile. "Merry Christmas."

"Merry Christmas, Dad." The way the words rolled so quickly and effortlessly off Will's tongue made Hannibal pause. It was the first time Will had called him Dad since they ran away. He hadn't realized just how much he missed that until that moment. He found himself hoping that it would be used again as time went on. He was content with being just Hannibal for now though. Will was with him and he was happy, that was all that mattered. Maybe their situation wasn't perfect, but it was good enough today.

End Notes

Sorry if this isn't that well put together, most of it came into existence at around 3 am.

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